

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Office of Fire and Aviation
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To: State Directors

From: Director, National Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Technical Fire Management Program Final Project Topics DD: 7/30/99

The Bureau of Land Management has participated in the Technical Fire Management (TFM) program since 1981. During that time, nearly fifty BLM employees have successfully completed the program. In 1998, nine BLM employees embarked on the current TFM session, a record level for our participation in the program. The TFM program is accredited through Colorado State University, allowing students to obtain 18 upper-division credits upon successful completion of the curriculum. In many cases, these credits allow personnel in the fire program to successfully compete for jobs in the GS-401 professional job series. Participants gain a great deal of knowledge and insight that can be brought home and applied at the local level. Participation in this program costs the Bureau approximately \$18,000 per student.

One of the major requirements of the TFM program is the completion of a "Final Project". This project must meet the established academic requirements of the program, describe a wildland fire or fire use-related problem, present an analysis of the problem using accepted methodologies, and evaluate alternatives for solving the problem. Many different subjects have been successfully explored by TFM students in completing their final projects. Topics ranging from the use of GIS in analysis of hazardous fuels to an examination of the effectiveness of Single-Engine Air Tankers have been addressed.

The purpose of this memorandum is to begin a process for identifying TFM final project topics that could have widespread benefits to the Bureau's fire and resource management programs. Currently, the process used for selecting a final project topic is somewhat haphazard. Students can complete the program if they complete a project that meets the requirements of TFM, while usefulness to the Bureau's fire program is left to chance. In some cases, students have completed projects that had a benefit to the fire program that was very limited in scope, such as completion

of a Burn Plan for a specific unit on a District. Although such a project may satisfy the requirements of TFM, it does little to benefit the fire program except on a very localized basis. Given the amount of money that BLM spends sending people through the TFM program, a more rational and organized approach to the identification of TFM projects would seem in order.

The idea that we are pursuing is to establish a “pool” of potential TFM projects for Bureau personnel to use when participating in the program. The projects in this pool would deal with topics and concerns having widespread ramifications for the Bureau’s fire program, either on a Statewide or National basis. These projects must also be narrow enough in scope that TFM students can complete them within the 18-month time frame of the program. The types of projects that lend themselves to this purpose are ones where large amounts of data are available (or easily obtainable) that need to be subjected to statistical and/or economic analysis. Specific problems involving fire effects, fire ecology, fire behavior, planning processes and complex fire management considerations would be appropriate.

The process of identifying and maintaining a pool of potential TFM projects will be an ongoing effort for the National Office of Fire and Aviation’s Training Group. The benefit to TFM students lies in allowing them to quickly identify a final project topic upon acceptance into the program. Students can begin working on their projects immediately rather than spending a lot of time simply identifying a problem on which to work. The benefits to the Bureau lie in accomplishing advanced research and analysis of fire management and fire use problems in the context of a program for which we are already paying.

Please respond to this memorandum no later than July 30, 1999, describing the top three projects for your State. The National Office will compile this information in a table and disseminate it to all States for future use. Project descriptions need to include a title, a brief description of the project, and a contact person (name, phone number and position) for follow-up if a TFM student selects this project topic.

If you have any questions about the TFM program, the final project, or Bureau participation in the program, please contact Larry Sutton, BLM Training, at 208-387-5374.

Signed by:
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